

Filled With the Spirit

by Andrew Murray

The sermon emphasizes the importance of faith, emptiness, and believing in the Father's gift and prayer for His special renewed fulfillment in being filled with the Spirit.

Scripture: John 7:38, Ephesians 5:18

Topics: "Spiritual Fulfillment", "Holy Spirit"

Description

Andrew Murray emphasizes the command to be filled with the Spirit as a privilege for every believer, not just a select few. He explains that this filling is essential for living a fruitful Christian life and that it can come in both quiet and powerful ways. Murray encourages believers to recognize their need for emptiness and faith to receive the Spirit's fullness, highlighting that true fulfillment comes from a deep relationship with Jesus. He illustrates this with the analogy of reservoirs, showing that both quiet and sudden fillings can coexist in a believer's life. Ultimately, he calls for a humble expectation of God's work in our lives, trusting in His ability to fill us with His Spirit.

Transcript

'Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another.'-- Eph 5:18

THESE words are a command. They enjoin upon us, not what the state of apostles or ministers ought to be, but what should be the ordinary consistent experience of every true-hearted believer. It is the privilege every child of God may claim from his Father, to be filled with the Spirit. Nothing less will enable him to live the life he has been redeemed for, abiding in Christ, keeping His commandments, and bearing much fruit. And yet, how little this command has been counted among those which all ought to keep! How little it has been thought possible or reasonable that all should be expected to keep it !

One reason of this is undoubtedly that the words have been wrongly understood. Because with the day of Pentecost, and on more than one subsequent occasion, the being filled with the Spirit was accompanied with the manifest enthusiasm of a supernatural joy and power, such a state has been looked on as one of excitement and strain, quite inconsistent with the quiet course of ordinary life. The suddenness and the strength and the outward manifestation of the Divine impulse were so linked with the idea of being filled with the Spirit, that it was thought to be something for special occasions, a blessing only possible to a very few. Christians felt as if they could not venture, as if they did not need, to fix their hopes so high ; as if, were the blessing given to them, it would be impossible in their circumstances to maintain or to manifest it.

The message I have to bring today is that the command is indeed for every believer, and that, as wide as the precept, is the promise and the power too. May God give us grace, that our meditation on this His Word may waken in the heart of every reader, not only strong desire but the firm assurance that the privilege is meant for him, that the way is not too hard, that the blessing will in very deed yet become his own.

In a country like South Africa, where we often suffer from drought, we find two sorts of dams or reservoirs made for catching up and storing water. On some farms you have a fountain, but with a stream too weak to irrigate with. There a reservoir is made for collecting the water, and the filling of the reservoir is the result of the gentle, quiet inflow from the fountain day and night. In other cases, again, the farm has no fountain at all; the reservoir is built in the bed of a stream or in a hollow where, when rain falls, the water can be collected. In such a place, the filling of the reservoir, with a heavy fall of rain, is often the work of a very few hours, and is accompanied with a rush and violence not free from danger. The noiseless supply of the former farm is, at the same time, the surer, because the supply, though apparently feeble, is permanent; in tracts where the rainfall is uncertain, a reservoir may stand empty for months or years.

There is the same difference in the way in which the fulness of the Spirit comes. On the day of Pentecost, at times when new beginnings are made, in the outpouring of the Spirit of conversion in heathen lands, or of revival among Christian people, suddenly, mightily, manifestly, men are filled with the Holy Ghost. In the enthusiasm and the joy of the newly found salvation, the power of the Spirit is undeniably present. And yet, for those who receive it thus, there are special dangers. The blessing is often too much dependent on the fellowship with others, or extends only to the upper and more easily reached currents of the soul's life: the sudden is often the superficial; the depths of the will and the inner life have not been reached. Other Christians there are who have never been partakers of any such marked experience, and in whom, nevertheless, the fulness of the Spirit is no less distinctly seen in the deep and intense devotion to Jesus, in a walk in the light of His countenance and the consciousness of His Holy presence, in the blamelessness of a life of simple trust and obedience, and in the humility of a self-sacrificing love to all around. They have their types in what Barnabas was: 'a son of consolation, a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost.'

And which of these is now the true way of being filled with the Spirit? The answer is easy. There are farms on which both the above-named reservoirs are to be found, auxiliary to each other. There are even reservoirs, where the situation is favourable, in which both the modes of filling are made use of. The regular, quiet, daily inflowing keeps them supplied in time of great drought; in time of rain they are ready to receive and store up large supplies. There are Christians who are not content but with special mighty visitations: the rushing mighty wind, floods outpoured, and the baptism of fire-these are their symbols. There are others to whom the fountain springing up from within, and quietly streaming forth, appears the true type of the Spirit's work. Happy they who can recognise God in both, and hold themselves always ready to be blessed in whichever way He comes.

And what are now the conditions of this fulness of the Spirit? God's word has one answer-faith. It is faith alone that sees and receives the Invisible, that sees and receives God Himself. The cleansing from sin and the loving surrender to obedience, which were the conditions of the first reception of the Spirit, are the fruit of the faith that saw what sin was, and what the blood, and what the will and the love of God. Of these we do not speak here again. Our text is for believers who have been faithful in their seeking to obey, and yet have not what they long for. By faith they must specially see what there is that needs to be cast out. All filling needs emptying. I do not here speak of the cleansing out of sin, and the surrender to full obedience.

This is always the first essential. But I speak of believers who in this think they have done what God demands, and yet fail of the blessing. The first condition of all filling is emptiness. What is a reservoir but a great hollow, a great emptiness prepared, waiting, thirsting, crying for the water to come ? Any true abiding fulness Of the Spirit is preceded by emptying. ' I sought the blessing long and earnestly,' said one, 'and I wondered why it did not come. At last I found it was because there was no room in my heart to receive it.' In such emptying out there are various elements. A deep dissatisfaction with the religion we have hitherto had. A deep consciousness of how much there has been of the wisdom and the work of the flesh in it. A discovery, and confession, and giving up of all in life that had been kept in our own hands and management, in which self had hitherto reigned, of all in which we had not thought it necessary or possible that Jesus should directly be consulted and pleased. A deep conviction of impotence and utter helplessness to grasp or seize what is offered. A surrender, in poverty of spirit to wait on the Lord in His great mercy and power, 'according to the riches of His glory, to strengthen us mightily by His Spirit in the inner man.' A great longing, thirsting, waiting, crying, a praying without ceasing for the Father to fulfil His promise in us, and take full possession of us within. Such an emptying is on the way to the filling.

With this is needed the believing which accepts, which receives, which holds the gift. It is through faith in Christ and in the Father that the Divine fulness will flow into us. Of the same Ephesians, to whom the command is given, 'Be filled with the Spirit,' Paul had said, 'In Christ, having believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.' The command refers to what they had already received: the fountain was within them ; it had to be opened up, and way made for it; it would spring up and fill their being. And yet not as if this was in their own power: Jesus had said, ' He that believeth, keeps believing in me, rivers of living water shall flow out of him.' The fulness of the Spirit is so truly in Jesus, the receiving out of Him must so really be in the unbroken continuity of a real life-fellowship, the ceaseless inflow of the sap from Him the living Vine must so distinctly be met by the ceaseless reciprocity of a simple faith, that the upspringing of the fountain within can only be in the dependence on Jesus above. It is by the faith of Jesus, whose baptism with the Spirit has as distinct a commencement as His cleansing with the blood, but is also maintained by, as continuous a renewal, that the inflow will grow ever stronger until it comes to the overflowing.

And yet the faith in Jesus, and the hourly and evergrowing upspringing of the Spirit, will not dispense with faith in the Father's special gift and the prayer for His special renewed fulfilment of His promise. For these same Ephesians, who had thus the Spirit within them as the earnest of their inheritance, Paul prays to the Father ' that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, that ye may be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man.' The verbs both denote not a gradual work, but an act, something done at once. The expression, 'according to the riches of His glory,' indicates something which is to be a great exhibition of the Divine love and power, something very special and Divine. They had the Spirit indwelling. He prayed for them that the direct interposition of the Father might give them such mighty workings of the Spirit, such a fulness of the Spirit, that the indwelling of Christ, and a life in the love that passeth knowledge, and a being filled with the fulness of God, might be their blessed personal experience. When the flood came of old, the windows of heaven above, and the fountains of the great deep beneath, were together opened. It is still so in the fulfilment of the promise of the Spirit: 'I will pour floods upon the dry ground.' The deeper and clearer the faith in the Indwelling Spirit, and the simpler the waiting on Him, the more abundant will be the renewed down-coming of the Spirit from the heart of the Father direct into the heart of His waiting child.

There is one more aspect in which it is essential to remember that this fulness comes to faith. God loves when He appears to come in lowly and unlikely appearance, to clothe Himself in the garment of humility which He wants His children to love and wear. 'The Kingdom of Heaven is like a seed:' only faith can know what glory there is in its littleness. Thus was the dwelling of the Son on earth; thus is the indwelling of the Spirit in the heart. He asks to be believed in, when nothing is seen or felt. Believe that the fountain that springs up and flows forth in living streams is within, even when all appears dry. Take time to retire into the inner chamber of the heart, and thence send up praise and offer worship to God in the assurance of the Holy Ghost within. Take time to be still and realise, and let the Spirit Himself fill thy spirit with this most spiritual and heavenly of all truths-that He dwells within thee. Not in the thoughts or feelings first, but in the life, deeper than where we can see and feel, is His temple, His hidden dwellingplace. When once faith knows that it hath what it has asked, it can afford to be patient, and can abound in thanksgiving even where the flesh would murmur. It can trust the Unseen Jesus and the Hidden Spirit. It can believe in that little and unlikely seed, the smallest of all the seeds. It can trust and give glory to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all it can think, and can mightily strengthen in the inner man, just when all appears feeble and ready to faint. Believer! expect not the fulness of the Spirit in the way which thy human reasoning deviseth, but even as was the coming of the Son of God without form or comeliness, in a way that is folly to human wisdom. Expect the Divine Strength in great weakness; become a fool to receive the Divine wisdom which the Spirit teacheth; be willing to be nothing, because God chooseth the things that are not to bring to nought the things that are. So shalt thou learn not to glory in the flesh, but to glory in the Lord. And in the deep joy of a life of daily obedience and childlike simplicity, thou shalt know what it is to be filled with the Spirit.

O my God ! Thy fulness of love and of glory is like a boundless ocean-infinite and inconceivable. I bless Thee that, in revealing Thy Son, it pleased Thee that all the fulness of the Godhead should dwell in Him bodily, that in Him we might see that fulness in human life and weakness. I bless Thee that His Church on earth is even now, in all its weakness, His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all; that in Him we are made full; that by the mighty working of Thy Spirit, and the indwelling of Thy Son, and the knowledge of Thy love, we may be filled to all the fulness of God.

Blessed Father! I thank Thee that the Holy Spirit is to us the bearer of the Fulness of Jesus, and that in being filled with the Spirit we are made full with that Fulness. I thank thee that there, have been men on earth since Pentecost, not a few, of whom Thou hast seen that they were full of the Holy Ghost. O my God ! make me full. Let the Holy Spirit take and keep possession of my deepest, inmost life. Let Thy Spirit fill my spirit.

Let thence the fountain flow through all the soul's affections and powers. Let it flow over and flow out through my lips, speaking Thy praise and love. Let the very body, by the quickening and sanctifying energy of the Spirit, be Thy temple, full of the Life Divine. Lord my God! I believe Thou hearest me. Thou hast given it me-; I accept it as mine.

Oh, grant that throughout Thy Church the Fulness of the Spirit may be sought and found, may be known and proved. Lord Jesus our glorified King, oh, let Thy Church be full of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

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